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CHALLENGE

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Communist Response to Racist Unemployment:

Employed and Jobless, Unite to Fight the Bosses

World capitalism has produced an economic earthquake that is throwing tens of millions of workers onto the streets. U.S. unemployment is approaching 30 million (see box). In China, 26 million jobless migrants are seeking work (which is not even the total unemployment figure) provoking protests at factories and riots at government offices. Hundreds of thousands are being laid off in Europe, and if GM goes under, it's curtains for another 300,000 there.

In The U.S., 'These Jobs Are Not Coming Back'

The current crisis is leading to a "wrenching re-structuring of the American economy." (NY Times, 3/7) "These jobs are not coming back," says Wachovia's chief economist. "Many companies are abandoning whole areas of business."(NYT) With U.S. car sales having plummeted nearly 50% since 2007 — an annual pace of 17 million down to 9 million — which would "leave a lot of unneeded auto factories."(NYT)

This is exactly what Karl Marx analyzed as the fundamental contradiction in capitalism causing such crises: a planless system in which each capitalist tries to capture as much of the market as possible, resulting in the overproduction (over capacity) of the means of production. All the capital investment in hundreds of factories is lost as they close. Laid-off workers can't buy the tremendous amount of products manufactured in these "unneeded factories," leading to more layoffs and home foreclosures, which in turn depresses house values, aggravating the crisis still more.

U.S. Unemployed Soars to 30 Million

Behind the phony government unemployment rate figure of 8.1% is the fact that this represents "only" 12.5 million. It doesn't count the 5.6 million who have given up looking for non-existent jobs nor the 8.6 million underemployed who are forced to work part-time because they can't find full-time jobs. (All figures from the NY Times, 3/7)

Add to that 26.7 million total the 1.6 million in prisons for non-violent, mostly drug "offenses" (of the total 2.4 million inmates in the U.S.) who never should have been jailed in the first place, plus several million on welfare because there are no jobs, plus the hundreds of thousands who joined the military because they couldn't find jobs (and are continuing to do so during this depression) — all told the real unemployment figure is easily 30 million, or 20% of the labor force.

Even the government's monthly figures are distorted. They just admitted that the jobless figures for December and January were under-reported by 161,000, which means that the latest February figure of 651,000 will probably increase to well over 700,000 a month from now.

Figures don't lie, but liars can sure figure.

The Obama Administration: Of, By and For the Bosses

Obama's bank-bailout program only serves the capitalist class which he and all U.S. presidents represent. They will use fascism to discipline their own class to toe the line; to counter workers' rebellions against the bosses' attacks; and to promote their oil wars which Obama is expanding in South Asia. Their class interest is to save the profit system at the expense of tens of millions of workers, employed and unemployed, and cannot solve the crisis for us. This is especially true for black and Latino workers who suffer racist unemployment, double the jobless and home foreclosure rates. This is based on centuries of racist discrimination and super-exploitation which nets super-profits for the bosses, a foundation for their system.

In the Great Depression of the 1930s — which this deepening downturn is fast approaching — communists led millions of jobless workers into the streets demanding jobs and unemployment benefits and organized hundreds of thousands in sit-down strikes in the mass production industries for unionization and the 8-hour day. But unfortunately they did not point out to workers that these crises are built into the system. Unless there is a communist revolution to overthrow these bosses, the control of production and state power will always be used to take away any reforms — which is exactly what happened.

U.S. union leaders are defenders of the system and therefore are in the bosses' hip pockets. They have demoralized workers and have sunk union membership from 35% of the private industry workforce to 7%. When these hacks are forced by rank-and-file pressure to do something about these attacks — like the March 5, 50,000-strong march in New York City — it is to deflate the anger of the workers. After decades of betrayals and anti-communism by the union hacks, workers' anger is slowly growing. To channel this anger into fighting capitalism, the real cause of their misery, instead of looking for other "saviors" (be it a liberal fascist á la Obama or a conservative fascist), communists must build a base for our politics while involved in any fightback — using CHALLENGE as our ideological tool. This fightback could include any or all of the following:

Mass Action Is The Order Of The Day

• Organize strikes against layoffs; stop work if co-workers are being laid off;

• Establish union committees to unite those still working with the unemployed, led by rank-and-filers defying foot-dragging by sellout union leaders;

• Win local unions to organize marches on government buildings and mass demonstrations surrounding companies that announce future layoffs;

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Rulers' Financial Crisis, '7 Deadly Scenarios' Means War on Workers

As imperialist rivalry, now aggravated by economic crisis, keeps intensifying, potential bloodbaths far deadlier than Iraq or Afghanistan are emerging globally. Andrew Krepinevich, a Defense Department strategist has just written "7 Deadly Scenarios: A Military Futurist Explores War in the 21st Century." (Krepinevich is no armchair pundit; see box at right for his résumé.)

Publicity for the book identifies as plausible cataclysms: "(1) the unraveling of the state of Pakistan; (2) a nuclear attack on the United States with materials covertly transported across borders; (3) a pandemic influenza sweeping across the globe; (4) escalation of an Arab-Israeli conflict toward a nuclear showdown; (5) a U.S. standoff with China over Taiwan; (6) the crippling of an increasingly fragile global economy; and (7) a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq gone bad." Any one could cause massive loss of life and provoke an all-out U.S.-led war.

(An influenza pandemic scenario has produced bosses' plans to use cops and the military to prevent any movement of large segments of populations to go to their jobs, in or out of the country or anywhere else without permission. A future CHALLENGE article will detail this fascist scenario.)

Though things can change rapidly, the first and last cases seem the most immediate. Nuclear-armed Pakistan is already inflamed by the Taliban and a military bent on war with nuclear-armed India. But additionally, Foreign Policy Magazine, an arm of the liberal Washington Post (March/April 2009), says: "Pakistan's small but politically powerful middle class has been slammed by the collapse of the country's stock market. Meanwhile, a rising proportion of the country's huge population of young men is staring unemployment in the face. It is not a recipe for political stability."

Iraq: GI's Back Sooner Than Expected?

The murderous efforts of 147,000 regular U.S. troops and an equal number of allies and mercenaries in Iraq can't stop frequent bombings. On March 8, a suicide attack killed 28 people at Iraq's police academy, and 33 more the next day. Obama's proposed shift of U.S. troops from Iraq to Afghanistan can only embolden Islamic militants in Iraq. GIs may be back in Baghdad sooner than expected.

Scenarios Four and Five, standard Pentagon doctrine for years, take on enhanced urgency in the current economy. The U.S. counter-threat to Iran's nuclear threat to Israel over Palestine dates back to the Clinton administration. Checking the growth of a Chinese blue-water navy that can dominate Mid-East/Far East oil-supply routes was one reason President Jimmy Carter began his Persian Gulf Rapid Deployment Force. The latest financial crash only increases U.S. rulers' needs to forcibly control the world's cheapest — and thus most profitable — fuel supplies.

Item Six concerns a more belligerent Russia. Oil at $140 per barrel enabled Putin to buy off his population with jobs and other material incentives. Now he must resort to whipping up the warlike empire-rebuilding spirit that brought him to power a decade ago. As Foreign Policy (March-April, 2009) says, "He stirred dormant nostalgia for the lost Soviet empire...." Now Putin faces "an imploding economy, expanding economic hardship, and an increasingly desperate Russian state that must rely on repression and nationalism."

Rulers Preparing for Two Simultaneous Wars

Krepinevich's Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment (CSBA) says the Navy must "prepare to fight and win two overlapping conflicts" against a continental-sized adversary [China or Russia] and a mid-sized nuclear-armed regional adversary [Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, or India]. It urges the Navy both to cut costs and to fire all its bullets before they rust. "Exploit ships now in production to greatest extent possible. Reduce total number of different ship types. Reduce crew sizes." (CSBA website). CSBA reports underlie an ongoing series of New York Times editorials on restructuring the military.

Workers Need to Take the Offensive

Two scenarios are missing here. One is the kind of mass anti-war organizing in the Vietnam era (led most militantly by our Party) that has made restoring the draft politically unacceptable. The CSBA considers conscription an "extreme measure" even in a deepening depression with sharpening challenges to the U.S. rulers' empire.

But the rulers sorely need to beef up their forces. They're not giving up on an expanded military. That's why they're organizing a "back-door" draft — Obama's National Service, with pumped-up patriotism and loyalty (to the bosses) to induce millions of youth to join the military in exchange for college tuition or, for undocumented immigrant youth, U.S. citizenship.

This leads to the most important scenario of all, the need to fight for communist revolution. Because of the demise of the old communist movement, rulers worldwide have been able to channel workers' anger down dead-end nationalist, ethnic and religious paths.

That's why communists and other militant workers need to up the ante of class struggle against the profit-driven ruling class, hell-bent on imperialist wars. We must mount an offensive on racist unemployment (see front page), win soldiers and sailors to join their brothers and sisters in other countries to rebel against the common enemy: the capitalist warmakers. We must organize strikes against the rulers' attacks on workers' living standards, against their wars and their attempt to implement fascist measures in the workplace.

In all this, we must unite the working class — black, Latino, Asian and white, men and women — against the rulers' crises that worsen workers' misery exponentially. All this will move us towards our Party's long-term goal, rebuilding revolutionary class consciousness to prepare our class for communist revolution. ✪

CEO For Murder, Inc.

Andrew Krepinevich has a 20-year career as an Army officer, teaching at West Point and serving in the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment and Quadrennial Review, the Pentagon's top long-range planning bodies. He participated in Clinton's 1997 force review that set the stage for U.S.-led mass murder in Serbia and Iraq. Today Krepinevich runs the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, an outfit studying which hardware and troop configurations can give the U.S. war machine its "biggest bang for the buck" in coming wars.

OUR FIGHT

✯Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism — wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world.

✯Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.

✯Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

✯Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society's benefits and burdens.

✯Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

✯Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and traditional gender roles created by class society.

**✯Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism.
One International working class, one world, one Party.**

✯Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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Unite to Fight the Bosses

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• Raise demands in unions, community groups, churches, schools and colleges to unite with workers in their areas to protest bosses' attacks;

• Support striking workers in our areas, such as those at Stella D'Oro in the Bronx, NY and elsewhere, with funds and by joining picket lines;

• Organize students to participate in these actions and to support their parents who are either on strike, face layoffs or can mobilize their co-workers into action;

• Reach across all borders in solidarity with workers internationally who are facing these same attacks, especially auto workers who are in a unique position to unite against the auto bosses who have "globalized."

No doubt many rank-and-file workers will come up with additional ideas for action. But it is the job of communists in PLP and their close friends to inject our red ideas into this struggle, to do what was not done in the 1930s: advance the need for communist revolution to overthrow the profit-driven capitalist system that has thrived on unemployment, forcing workers to suffer the losses caused by the bosses' crisis. These ideas can be spread effectively by the mass sale of CHALLENGE, the expansion of CHALLENGE networks and winning workers to subscribe to the paper.

By upping the ante of class struggle around the issue of mass unemployment, we can raise the level of understanding within the working class to the question of capitalism's inability to provide a decent life for workers everywhere. This leads to the need to destroy it and put in place a communist system within which workers receive the full benefit of all the value we, and we alone, produce.✪

Fighting Racist Deportations Can Build PLP

CHICAGO, March 8 — "La lucha obrera no tiene frontera!" ("Workers' struggles have no borders!") As the chant filled the banquet hall, hearts swelled with pride. Workers and youth, citizen and immigrant, especially the wonderful BP oil refinery workers swept up in a racist immigration raid last December, celebrated the unity we have found in fighting back. After a PLP member delivered her message of solidarity, salsa music filled the air.

On only a week's notice, a small grassroots community center organized a fundraiser to help the BP workers meet their daily needs. They had worked for a contractor cleaning the giant BP refinery in East Chicago, Indiana, when they were arrested last December. At a meeting to discuss "parking in the lot," doors were locked and ICE agents swarmed in, arresting 11 women and four men. Since then, they've been fighting courts, cops and crooks.

One crook, their priest, held a fundraiser that collected over $14,500, reflecting the support the workers' enjoy. But most of the money has gone to a politically-connected lawyer the priest hired to represent only a few workers. This lawyer doesn't speak Spanish and comunicates only through the priest.

Most workers are seeking their own legal representation with community center help, but are being denied funds for attorney fees. Those who found other attorneys see their cases moving much more quickly than those going with the priest's lawyer, leading many to suspect they're dragging the cases out to drain more money from the funds raised for the workers and their families.

Workers are outraged over their trust being abused. Those families the fund was created to help continue to struggle to pay legal fees. Because the BP workers, many single moms, are unable to work, rent, utilities and grocery bills are mounting, causing tremendous stress. The community center has taken women to food pantries and assisted them in finding discounted or free legal aid, but that has done little to ease the incredible economic burden.

PLP members donated time and money to make this event possible. But the largest contribution was our revolutionary communist politics and our message of internationalism and multi-racial, working-class solidarity, delivered by our comrade's talk and evidenced by our example. Three tables of comrades and friends of all colors, immigrant and citizen, were among the first to arrive, took tickets at the door and picked up garbage before leaving.

A vigil has been organized for the 9th of every month, to show support for the BP workers. While it is difficult to win many away from being under their priest's manipulative thumb, we're sharpening the contradiction. Our dedication stands in contrast to this opportunist priest.

Through disciplined work, spreading CHALLENGE and patiently building strong ties, we must help the BP workers day-to-day, and remind them capitalism will never solve their problems, a system in crisis and headed to fascist terror and wider wars. Only communist revolution can defeat the bosses who profit from our misery.

We steel ourselves for the long haul, but fighting for a communist world, with no borders and based on equality, is the solution. Out of this struggle we can win BP workers and others to march on May Day under the red flag of PLP! ✪

Calif. Students Battle Bosses' Crisis Cuts

PASADENA, CA, February 27 — Hundreds of students from fourteen community colleges rallied to fight the budget cuts that are devastating their campuses. College administrators tried to divert their anger into praise for the state legislature, but PL members and friends helped to organize chanting that disrupted the official event and led to a short breakaway rally.

"I thought we changed the vibe overall," commented a student. "Our group felt good leaving there. I had so many comments of empowerment, courage, and fight unlike anything I have ever seen before."

A rift between students and administrators broke out before the rally when an administrator scolded students from Rio Hondo College for carrying signs that read "WTF: Where's the funding?" A student challenged her and a brief confrontation ensued. Ironically this same administrator later praised the emcee, a foul-mouthed comedian, as "the perfect representation of the community college mission."

The emcee declared, "this is a thank-you rally, not a protest rally." This was news to the hundreds of students that came out and are battling with class cancellations, disappearing tutors, overcrowded classrooms etc, as a result of the latest round of budget cuts. "What are we supposed to be thankful for?" one student asked angrily.

The rally went from bad to worse when the emcee launched into a half-hour "comedy" routine. Like many stand-up comics, his act was an unfunny mix of racism, sexism, homophobia, and nationalism. Many students were disgusted. "We didn't come here to be entertained," one said, "they just brought us here to use us."

One delegation of students met briefly and then started chanting: "They say cut back, we say fight back!" The comedian responded by insulting the group of mostly black students. They chanted louder disrupting his act. He asked the audience to applaud if they wanted him to continue. Some did, but most didn't. Shaken, he quickly ended his routine and a brass band started to play, signaling the official end of the rally. Then the entire delegations from three colleges — almost fifty students — moved to the sidewalk and started their own rally!



While most students bought into the rally theme that community colleges are "the key to the California economy" and that a college education was their key to the future, many took PL leaflets, CHALLENGE and talked with Party members about the nature of the capitalist crisis. Our leaflet attacked these illusions, stating, "Students need to ally with industrial workers and soldiers who are the key to bringing down this capitalist system..." We also explained, "the alternative is communism a classless society where workers hold power."

Earlier discussions about the economic crisis, and a video showing mass communist-led protests in Detroit during the Great Depression, helped to prepare students politically for the rally. By ones and twos, more are reading and distributing CHALLENGE, and thinking seriously about joining our Party. The struggle against cutbacks will continue on our campuses and on buses to Sacramento and open more doors as we build for more class struggle leading up to May Day 2009 and the Industrial Summer Projects in Seattle and LA. ✪

Oaxaca PL'ers Make Mark At APPO Congress

OAXACA, MEXICO, Feb. 21- 22 — The 3rd Congress of APPO (Popular Assembly for the People of Oaxaca), met here with over 700 delegates — teachers, farm workers, indigenous communities, workers, students and others — on a reform agenda: popular democracy, against privatization, freedom for political prisoners and the firing of Governor Ulises Ruiz, among others.

During the two days, a few dozen members and friends of PLP distributed 1,000 CHALLENGES (asking for voluntary donations) and 300 leaflets among the participants and our friends in Oaxaca. A comrade who was active inside the Congress brought 100 CHALLENGES to the participants.

It was impressive to see how many people sat reading our revolutionary newspaper, especially the article that specifically exposed the APPO leaders' reformist, opportunist line while also calling on the masses to join us in the fight for a real communist revolution. We expected to be attacked verbally since the article above sharply criticized opportunists in APPO for trying to use the movement to obtain elective office. But, on the contrary, people read the article and leaflet with great interest. And then the majority of the Congress decided that all those who want to belong to APPO must renounce participating with the capitalist politicians, and that APPO leaders can't use their position for electoral careers. We believe that was partially due to our Party's position, showing that our presence had a big effect, even though we're not the only group in APPO against the bosses' elections. We were very inspired by this and our other activities there.

In the afternoon, PLP had its own communist school with 28 people attending. We discussed the international situation, the CHALLENGE article about the militarization of Mexico and the PLP document on Democratic Centralism.

The discussion was comradely but sharp, mainly on democratic centralism, which was used to discuss the best way to present the Party, communist ideas and our hatred of the rotten capitalist system during the May Day marches. Some thought it was important to consider the fascist militarization and its relation to the Party's long-term life and development. Others thought about the moral need and anger to show that the Party, its red flags and communist ideas are alive and well.

One comrade said, "We have to vote" on this issue, but the majority disagreed, saying we must use democratic centralism and more discussion to come to an agreement that benefits the whole Party and the international working class. The responsibility lies with the collective, not with one person.

Part of the event included visiting an organic products co-op. One of the partners explained that previously it had been a big ranch, terribly super-exploiting the farmworkers, but now they had taken it over. Some comrades explained that unfortunately, because of their high prices, these products are not accessible to people with little money. They're for an elite market. In this area we had a friendly get-together.

This weekend was one more step in the development of the political understanding of each Party activist, in developing personal relations where the essence of our lives, the fight for communism, unites us struggle by struggle, reaffirming that our road is communist revolution and our life is one of struggle. ✪

50,000 Rally in NYC:

Cut the Bosses, Not the Budget

NEW YORK CITY, March 5 — "Students and Labor: Shut the City Down" chanted hundreds of City University of NY students and teachers blocking traffic as they marched into a City Hall rally of over 50,000 workers and students demonstrating against multi-billionaire Mayor Bloomberg's proposed budget cuts. The rally included members of the United Federation of Teachers, the Hotel Workers Union, 1199-SEIU and several other major unions. The cuts fall particularly hard on black and Latino workers who, because of racism, suffer double rates of unemployment and whose communities are especially hard hit by the cuts in services.

The usual suspects of union misleaders and politicians dominated the speakers platform, including Congressman Anthony Weiner who's running for mayor declaring that "too much" is being paid to city workers.

PL high school teachers and students had planned to rally at one location and then march into the demonstration chanting and holding a banner. Throughout the day they urged their co-workers and friends to join their contingent. They arrived at the rally holding their banner on a metal fencing, and then formed a picket line within the rally while chanting on bullhorns, "Make the bosses take the losses," calling on all workers to strike against the budget cuts. Workers joined our chants, raising their fists and taking CHALLENGES and leaflets. Many of the students felt it was a positive experience, militantly expressing communist ideas and helping the Party's growth.

Hundreds of CUNY students from Hunter College, joined by a number of professors and staff, including PL'ers, had walked out of their classes to protest tuition hikes, layoffs and the budget cuts. They were chanting, "They say cut back, we say FIGHT BACK!" and "money for schools, not for war!" They then joined a rally of another several hundred college students from CUNY's Borough of Manhattan Community College condemning the budget cuts and marched to the larger rally at City Hall.

The proposed 600-dollar per year tuition hike will push thousands of CUNY's mostly black, Latino and international students out of the university. Speakers angrily described how there already aren't enough resources to meet Hunter College student needs; most are already stretched thin by working and attending school. Several condemned the bank bailouts and tied the current struggle to the history of CUNY students' fight for free tuition, against racism, layoffs and imperialist war.

One hospital worker led a contingent of 70 from his workplace on the very day that two hospitals shut their doors for good in Queens. Many workers wanted to participate and take action but the union mis-leaderships limit them to supporting liberal Democratic Party politicians, refusing to organize strikes against the cuts.

The ruling class is pushing workers to the wall to take the losses from the bosses' worldwide economic meltdown. The hundreds of billions Obama's plan is siphoning off to the banks and spending on expanding the war in Afghanistan-Pakistan is coming out of workers' hides. This is all testimony to the failure of capitalism to provide for workers' needs and intensifying their oppression. It opens the door to win millions to communist revolution as the only solution to the hell created by the profit system, with its bosses, bankers, racism and imperialist war. ✪

Union Leaders Have No Real Answer to 30,000 Layoffs



SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO, March 6 — Workers from several public-worker unions picketed La Fortaleza, Governor Luis Fortuño's building, protesting his March 3 announcement threatening possibly 30,000 layoffs among public workers here. The new governor claims this is the only way to deal with the island's enormous budget deficit. This is another example of the bosses and their politicians trying to make workers pay for capitalism's crisis.

Unfortunately, the union leaders here have themselves helped the bosses. In exchange for some crumbs, they agreed to accept Law 45 which basically bans public-worker strikes. During last year's militant mass teachers' strike, unions like those here that are part of the SEIU-Change to Win federation sided with then governor Acevedo Vila against the teachers. (Dennis Rivera, a former pro-independence activist here and now a big-time hack in SEIU was behind this). So this history of sellouts has left workers with still another obstacle in fighting the latest wave of attacks — one reason why today's protest was smaller than expected.

But nothing lasts forever. Workers are beginning to realize that playing nice with the bosses doesn't pay. Workers need to build a revolutionary communist leadership to learn that a system that cannot provide jobs and services for workers must be destroyed. ✪

AFL-CIO Hacks Deflate Angry Workers

CHICAGO, February 17 — It was hard not to be moved when you first entered the Plumbers Union Hall at the rally to pass the Labor Free Choice Act (union certification based on a majority of signed union cards, not on a vote). Thousands of workers stood shoulder to shoulder wearing T-shirts, hats, sweatshirts and carrying signs reading, "Strength in Unity," and "UNITE for Power." Men and women, young and old of all colors, speaking all languages, greeted friends and introduced themselves to strangers.

The energy and enthusiasm was electric. It was easy to see how unions seduce workers. On one level, parts of their message is somewhat similar to ours. But as the rally proceeded, it became clear that the similarities are barely skin deep.

The AFL-CIO fat cats got the crowd "in the mood" with a black youth gospel choir singing "God Bless America" and "America the Beautiful." Every time a misleader said it was "time for action," and "the City runs on our backs," workers cheered and exchanged high fives.

But enthusiasm waned as speaker after speaker praised Barack Obama and told the workers to call their Congresspeople and tell them to vote for the Free Choice Act. Soon, the room emptied; the remaining speakers spoke to less than half the original crowd. Momentarily, teachers and machinists, auto, transit, healthcare and buildings trades workers and more were united in one place, ready for action, waiting for direction on how to express their power. It seemed almost everyone but the "leadership" felt the potential in that room, and that "calling your Congressperson" fell way short. The very life of the city sat within those walls.

One was both inspired and outraged, and couldn't help but wonder what a difference if our message linking capitalist crisis and imperialist war, fighting racist terror and cutbacks, and organizing a general strike and moving on the banks and centers of power for communist revolution were blaring from the stage. I could imagine the cheers becoming a roar as workers greeted the truth finally ringing from the stage.

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Katrina Sequel: Court O.K.'s 'Guest-Worker' Slavery

Last month, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit ruled that the Decatur Hotel chain owed not one penny to 300 immigrant workers from Peru, Bolivia and the Dominican Republic who each paid contractors $3,000 to $5,000 for the "privilege" of coming to the New Orleans to be super-exploited. In one more sign of growing fascism in the legal system, the Court OK'd these slave labor conditions on the grounds that the workers couldn't prove that Decatur "required" or "approved" of these payments.

These workers were recruited to come to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina destroyed large parts of the city in August 2005. New Orleans' hotel bosses like Decatur saw a big chance to lower the already rock-bottom wages of the mostly black hotel workforce there. Conniving with other local bosses, recruiters promised the workers 60-80 hours work per week, time-and-a-half for overtime, free food and rooms in hotels with swimming pools.

The recruiters lied through their teeth! The hotel bosses jammed four workers into each room, charging $50 per week per worker, plus $8 per meal. The workers only got 24-40 hours per week at $6.39 per hour. Of course, as "guest workers," termination or leaving the job could result in immediate deportation. And their every move was under the watchful eye of the hotel bosses.

Despite this racist and fascist set-up, these workers organized against their slave-like working conditions. Unfortunately, the leadership of this struggle fell into the hands of opportunists, including Saket Soni, now head of the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice. Soni and his fake-leftist friends convinced the workers that they should mainly rely on the bosses' courts to win this battle. He and others viciously attacked PLP members when we tried to expose the workers to a real communist view of how to fight these bosses' attacks with class struggle.

Immigration laws, like all bosses' laws, are designed to insure that U.S. employers reap maximum profits from the labor of the working class. The liberal Southern Poverty Law Center exposed this collaboration of the government with the bosses in its report "Close to Slavery." In order to legally hire guest workers, it was necessary to show that attempts to hire local residents failed. U.S. citizen workers would most likely have told Decatur where to stick their $6.39 per hour. However, Decatur's obviously false statement that they had tried to recruit workers from among "hurricane evacuees" was accepted by the U.S. Department of Labor, no questions asked.

This gave Decatur the green light to go ahead with its plans. They let the contractors handle the dirty work. This separation allowed them to claim that they "didn't know anything" about the recruiters' extortion. This gave the courts all they needed to legalize this workers' slavery.

Communists will never promote confidence in this bosses' system of "justice." Instead, we call for class warfare against the whole capitalist system and its attacks on workers. We encourage anti-racism and internationalism to win citizen workers to support the struggles of their immigrant brothers and sisters. Most importantly, we organize for a communist revolution. In a communist world, the bosses' national borders would be abolished, and none of our working-class brothers and sisters would endure slave-labor conditions in order to survive. ✪

Germany: Patriots, Socialists, Union Fakers, Neo-Nazis Thwart Workers

DRESDEN, GERMANY, February 26 — The capitalist economic crisis has reached here, hitting the auto industry particularly hard. Today, GM workers demonstrated in Germany, Sweden and Russia against GM's mass layoffs worldwide. GM is seeking 3.3 billion Euros (over $4 billion) from European rulers and has offered a restructuring plan that will close three assembly plants and cut production capacity by 30%. With the global financial crisis deepening, GM cannot get any bank loans, making government bailouts the only alternative to a shutdown that would put roughly 300,000 European workers on the street.

The major weakness holding autoworkers back is their union leaders' patriotism and nationalism. In the U.S. the UAW pushes, "Buy American." In Germany the IG Metall union hacks push the old fascist line of "German jobs for German workers." It's no wonder that this "Day of Action" was smaller and less militant than past ones.

Big troubled companies like Opel or Nokia, which closed its Bochum factory, line up with politicians to promise "patriotic" workers they will rebuild German industry "together." They used socialists like Thomas Jurk to calm angry workers in Saxony when Quimonda, Dresden's biggest firm, closed.

Jurk's friends who run the huge IG-Metall trade union join him in this Big Lie. But the working class here can punch back by discarding these misleaders' nationalist ideas and the racism that feeds on patriotism.

Workers in Germany, the world's leading export economy by value, are starting to feel the scourge of the crisis. The government, a coalition between the bosses' two "alternating" parties, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats, already approved a plan to rescue the most important banks, like Germany's second-biggest, Commerzbank.

But every sector is reporting big losses: auto, shipbuilding, iron and steel, other manufacturing, and the media. The bosses are using plant closings, wage-cuts, layoffs unemployment and longer working hours to "solve" the crisis by directly attacking the working class. But this is not just "a German problem."



In early February, 2,800 workers demonstrated against the Quimonda shutdown, Dresden's largest employer, with 4,600 workers, amid an already economically struggling Saxony region. Saxony's Socialist economic minister Thomas Jurk, along with the IG-Metall union hacks, tried to calm the protesters' anger with typical ruling-class rhetoric: "we will make new investments and secure new jobs in the city."

But Quimonda has another plant in Vila do Conde, Portugal, where it notified 1,800 workers that it's shutting down. Such circumstances demand not economic patriotism but a worldwide class struggle of internationalist workers allied across borders, from Portugal to Saxony.

However, Germany's government and its trade union lackeys here are spreading national "optimism" in order to divide the working class and hold back militancy. Instead, workers here and everywhere need to turn this current financial crisis into an overall political crisis for capitalism. For that they need the ideas and organizing power of an international revolutionary communist party like PLP.

On February 14, 6,000 neo-Nazis gathered here, trying to divert workers' anger into super-patriotism and racism against immigrant workers. They were marking the 64th anniversary of the terrible World War II U.K. /U.S firebombing of Dresden.

A counter-rally of 10,000 was soon organized behind the slogan "No pasarán" ("They shall not pass") used by anti-fascist fighters to stop Franco's troops and his German allies from entering Madrid during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. The anti-fascist demonstrators sought to prevent the new Nazis from marching through Dresden. But the cops protected the Nazis' march, clearing away blockades and clashing brutally with the anti-fascists.

Once again an exhibition of truly ruling-class politics: protecting Nazis while attacking an alliance of workers and students. As the socialists and fascists push their lies, the situation in Dresden gets worse. Now anti-fascist militancy against these racist super-patriots needs to be turned on the big capitalists who sponsor and protect them, using them as tools to divide and hold workers back. ✪

Obama-Bosses-UAW Gang-up Mugs Ford Workers

DETROIT, MI, March 9 — The new concessions the UAW granted to Ford are much more than the loss of benefits, break-time and retiree health care. They reflect that a new stage of fascism is needed to help the bosses survive 2009 and the global financial crisis that has brought the U.S. auto industry to a halt and threatened the survival of GM and Chrysler. Negotiators had to figure out how to meet targets imposed by Obama's auto oversight committee and the finance capitalists that stand behind them. We should expect more of this where the state and bosses impose fascist conditions on workers.

But, if we aggressively bring communist leadership workers will turn to revolutionary politics to counter these attacks.

We can also expect more auto workers to turn towards revolutionary communist leadership if we more aggressively offer it. At one Ford UAW local hall, more than 150 CHALLENGES were distributed along with hundreds of PLP fliers urging workers to reject the concessions and march on May Day until panicked local thugs stopped our comrades from reaching the workers.

Ford lost a record $14.6 billion in 2008 and conditions have only worsened. Ford U.S. sales dropped almost 50% in February. The new agreement eliminates a holiday, cuts break-time and suspends cost-of-living increases and performance bonuses, offers more buyouts and allows Ford to fund the retiree healthcare trust fund with 50% worthless stock instead of cash.

Pro-Boss Union 'Leaders' Have Saved Nothing And No One

These new concessions are "modifications" of the 2007 agreement that cut wages and benefits in half for new hires and gave away more than 100,000 jobs, before the current crash. Since the 1979 Chrysler bailout, the UAW leadership lost two-thirds of our members and the majority of the auto industry. They've saved nothing and no one. Now we're in a worldwide crisis of capitalism, shackled by a generation of pro-capitalist union leaders who refuse to fight back and who haven't sacrificed a dime.

We're facing a new Depression, with tens of millions jobless and losing their homes. In Detroit, Buffalo and Milwaukee, more than 50% of black males, 16-64, are unemployed, not to mention Flint, Chicago's West Side, Gary and Hammond. Capitalism's racist nature is evident as every measure of poverty, unemployment, and police terror hits black and Latino workers first and hardest. The bosses, the union and the Obama administration have ganged up to force us to pay for their crisis.

Ultimately, the bosses "solve" their global crises with fascist terror and more war. That's where this new sellout is leading. The war in Iraq is spreading to Afghanistan and Pakistan, with no end in sight.

We need to build a revolutionary communist movement, led by industrial workers, that can eventually lead the working class to power. We need to follow the example of the Republic Windows workers who sat down in their factory last December; build unemployment committees in our local unions to unite the employed and unemployed and fight evictions, hunger and for jobs. Most of all, we need to vote with our feet and bring a contingent of Ford workers to march on May Day! ✪

AFL-CIO Sellouts

continued from p. 4

AFL-CIO President Sweeney told everyone to "call and vote." I told a worker beside me, "imagine if he had said, 'STRIKE!'" (Which, of course, he never would.) The worker looked around the room, smiled and said, "We'd run the city." Exactly!

As the economy spirals into a deeper crisis, workers are growing increasingly weary and frustrated with a system that bails out billionaire bankers and closes factories and health clinics. Some already realize Obama is not the "change" we need.

Capitalism will do what it will; fall into crisis, reinvent itself, and fall into crisis again. We must resolve more firmly than ever to take advantage of every opportunity to bring our revolutionary communist politics to the masses, organize workers and develop new communist organizers for PLP.

The 75 CHALLENGES distributed at the rally was good, but only a drop in the bucket. Without new soldiers in this battle, the bosses will dig themselves out of this mess by burying the workers even deeper into oppressive pits. Now is the time to act. We've been exploited long enough. The world runs on our backs. It's time workers ran the world. Win workers to the only solution — communist revolution! ✪



LETTERS

Hero of Salvador War Is Reborn in PLP

During the 1970s, a group of us peasants, workers and students worked in the eastern part of El Salvador, where nobody charged for their work. We were labeled communists, even by the parish priest. I built homes without being paid a single penny, but my family never lacked food. The others in the group supplied me. We shared everything with the conviction to do what is correct. We practiced working-class solidarity. We worked in communities collectively. This influenced the rest of our lives, preparing us for the armed struggle, unfortunately sabotaged by our organization's mis-leadership.

The National Guard kidnapped me on August 2, 1977. I was building a home when they blindfolded me and took me with two other friends to the military barracks, where they began torturing us, tying our feet and hands to an iron post.

They later turned us over to the National Police in San Salvador where the horrible torture continued, to force us to confess we were communists. They put 220-volt electric shocks through me; my ears ruptured in blood. I fainted and dreamt that my mother, who had died three years before, visited me and dabbed camphor oil on my head because I was in deep pain. The moment she did this I felt no pain. I spent 11 days in pure torture at the police station. I had nothing to eat or drink, only blows and psychological torture.

On the 11th day I was transferred to the Santa Tecla prison. On my third day there I couldn't eat — my jaws were stiff, I felt no stomach. There were many interrogations. They told me if I took responsibility for why I was there they would give me 500 "colones" (money) and free me. They told me not to associate with communists, saying there would never be communism in El Salvador because the army would combat it. They said I could not be a communist because they were atheists and I was Catholic (as they were). I asked what kind of Catholics are in the assassins' army who kill everyone indiscriminately.

I was freed on August 29 because the communities and friends pressured the government of Colonel Molina. At that time partners in struggle seized 10 transmitters from the national radio in Morazán, despite being well-guarded by the army. They confronted soldiers in the Gotera barracks, but ultimately our forces captured it and issued a communiqué demanding my liberation.

All this pressure led to my release, but I was let out on the street like an animal out of a cage. Not knowing the area I hailed a taxi and told the driver what had happened, that I had no money. He drove me to the central market in San Salvador where my cousin worked. Both he and my cousin were glad to have helped me and happy I was alive, because most political prisoners were disappeared or murdered.

My cousin took me to her home to recuperate. The next day there was a workers' protest in San Salvador and she wanted me to stay home. But I went to San Miguel and found a friend who took me by bus to the Torola river. But before arriving at a bridge where the National Guard — the same ones who had imprisoned me — had been carrying out a big inspection, I got off.

For years I organized many workers who later became commanders and combatants on different FMLN war fronts. Today, much later, we have reconnected in the ranks of Progressive Labor Party. CHALLENGE/DESAFIO has been our greatest discovery of true communist philosophy. I'm being reborn in working-class politics, overcoming my disillusionment in believing there was no other party for the proletariat. But now that I've found PLP I feel I'm starting anew, with the memory of my four children fallen in combat.

Communist Comrade from El Salvador

Airport Workers Force Union 'Leaders' to Back Down

At an airport where PL is organizing, workers have taken some political leadership in a reform struggle against the union mis-leadership around bogus health insurance. The company has been blatantly racist in giving the mostly immigrant workers an extremely bad medical insurance plan which has cost workers thousands of dollars.

The SEIU mis-leadership has been dragging its behind in helping resolve this issue. They have mostly been undermining the workers' efforts to fight back because the union does not want to cause problems for the racist bosses since contract negotiations start at the end of the year.

The union went so far as to try to prevent the re-election of an anti-racist shop steward because of previous confrontations with union misleaders around anti-immigrant racism at the airport. They failed. He was reelected by the workers! The union mis-leadership stopped visiting our shift to avoid questions from workers. In one case a misleader hung up on a worker asking about insurance. The airport workers had enough!

The PL'er got together with some coworkers who all read CHALLENGE and came up with a collective plan to force the SEIU misleaders back to the airport. The B.S. leadership was sent an open letter from the workers detailing the complaints, especially about their union rep. They were given a deadline to respond to complaints, and workers threatened to go over their heads to the national SEIU in Chicago if there was no reply. It worked! A meeting was set up and the union official was forced to talk about medical insurance. This is by no means over.

An African American worker told the shop steward, "The threat made in the letter forced them to come to the airport!" There were workers from the U.S., Mexico, Nicaragua, and Ethiopia who either helped proofread, and distribute the open letter or gave statements regarding the medical insurance to the union. This shows the absolute necessity of workers' anti-racist collective action against the bosses' racist actions.

There were many political discussions with airport workers regarding this action. Workers took a step in learning why reforms under capitalism are limited and that eventually workers need communist revolution to solve our problems. The class struggle goes on and workers, soldiers, and students need PLP for communist revolution.

Airport Red

Castro Brothers Continue Perestroika

The latest shifts among top Cuban government officials show that Cuban "Perestroika" (capitalist reform) continues. Capitalism needs these changes to thrive and to show European, Chinese and even U.S. imperialists that some "changes" are being made in Cuba.

From the sidelines, Fidel himself pushes these reforms. He admitted he was consulted about the removal of Felipe Pérez Roque as Foreign Minister and Vice-president Carlos Lage. But in reality it appears that Fidel and Raul are not fighting each other but rather both are promoting those who agree more with their scheme, while eliminating those who might oppose their economic reform plans. Neither represent any real left alternative. In February 2008, Raúl announced these reforms, which just deepen the Cuban Perestroika.

The official report from the Cuban "Communist" Party says these latest changes in leadership followed deep discussion inside the Political Bureau of the Cuban ruling Party. Then Fidel in his "reflections" writings in the Cuban press accused those demoted, his former protégées, of being "ambitious" and that "the enemy outside of Cuba had illusions about them." Even though Fidel is not officially in power, his justifications of the power shift hide the real power struggle probably occurring inside the Cuban "red" bourgeois bureaucracy.

The coming economic and political measures will show even more clearly the kind of capitalist road Cuba will take, possibly State Capitalism as what they call socialism now existing in Cuba, or following even more the example of China's capitalism. But these reforms are bound to fail for workers, particularly since capitalism in any form — especially in this age of international economic meltdown — has proven unable to satisfy their basic needs.

Friends in Peru

Anger Mounts vs. Pasadena Cops' Murder of Black Worker



PASADENA, CA, February 19 — Leroy Barnes, a 38-year-old black worker, and father of three, was shot by Pasadena cops, killing him on the spot. The cops had pulled Barnes over for a traffic stop. At first, the cops lied about what happened. They said that Barnes shot at them but he did not shoot at all. They said he was outside the car, but he never stepped out of his car. Witnesses saw the police shoot him four times while he was inside his car, then pull him out of the car and shoot him seven more times as he lay on the street! As a crowd of angry people gathered, the racist cops shot into the air, to intimidate people protesting the murder. Even so, some people threw rocks at the cops. Many people in the neighborhood, as well as friends and family, are furious at the racist killer kkkops.

PLP members have taken leaflets and CHALLENGES to the neighborhood where Leroy Barnes was killed, to a nearby shopping center, and to area schools. Many people were glad to have the Party there. Recently an Oakland transit cop murdered Oscar Grant, also a black man and a father. Since this was caught on tape, the racist killer is being tried for murder. In the killing of Leroy Barnes, even the police tape is not being released!

Racist police terror, and anti-immigrant terror, are on the rise as official unemployment in California is over 10% (it's about double that if you count people in jail and people who have stopped looking for work). Obama and the capitalist system's answer to this crisis is to put even more racist cops on the street to terrorize workers, especially black and Latino workers, because the bosses fear rebellion.

They're right to be afraid! A system that can't provide decent jobs but only racist terror should be destroyed! PLP invites angry workers and youth to protest this killing, come to our May Day Dinner and march with the PLP contingent on May First, International Workers' Day, against racist terror, unemployment, imperialist war, and for communist revolution. ✪

Bangladesh Army Mutiny, Sri Lanka Civil War Tied to Oil Dogfight

Nothing is safe in the oil pipeline dogfight among the world's imperialists and Indian-Pakistani rulers. The terrorist attack against the Sri Lanka national cricket team is one example. The rulers of India and Pakistan blame each other's intelligence services for the attack. The Sri Lanka team replaced the Indian national team which pulled out after the recent Mumbai terrorist attack blamed on the ISI (Pakistan's intelligence service).

Just a few days before this attack, a mass mutiny by Bangladesh's border guard (the BRD) killed 74 army officers, almost the BRD's entire top brass. Years of corruption by their officers — sent from the regular army — frustrated the soldiers, who were mistreated and starved while making a miserable $70/month and seeing the officers selling their rations on the open market.

The mutiny began in BRD headquarters in Dhaka, the country's capital. Initially the military brass tried to storm the mutineers, but then the rebellion spread nation-wide, forcing the brass to negotiate with the rebels and even agree to their demands. After the rebellion ended, the army and the government began the arrest and hunting of over 1,000 rebel soldiers.

The BRD dates back to the 18th century when the British colonialists established the "Ramgarh Local Battalion." In 1971, East Pakistan, helped by India, went to war and broke with Pakistan, becoming Bangladesh. The BRD was used to patrol over 3,000 miles of border with India and Burma (Myanmar). The BRD, like the rest of South Asia's armies, retained all the class divisions of the old British colonial armies. Officers came from the ruling class while rank-and-file soldiers came from the working class and poor peasantry.

Unfortunately, in the absence of any real communist leadership, when these soldiers turned their guns against their officers, they were open to being misled by pro-Pakistani Islamists. The collapse of the old world communist movement reflected itself in the opportunism of the pro-Soviet and Maoist groups in Bangladesh — which supported "progressive-lesser evil" bosses and disarmed workers and their allies politically. This created illusions about "reforming" capitalism and prevented a fight for workers' power.

Early in January, after several years of military rule, a civilian government — considered to be pro-India — took power in Bangladesh. The mutiny was reportedly supported by forces within and outside the military who supported the country's recent "Talibanization." The new army chief, appointed by the civilian government, is considered "too secular" and pro-India and was clamping down on fundamentalists inside the military which are influenced by Pakistan and even by China.

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan Sunday Times reported (3/1) that a U.S. Marine Expeditionary Force might be sent to northern Sri Lanka under the guise of evacuating refugees from the civil war in that island nation. Thus, the U.S. could help the Sri Lankan army in its bloody "mop-up" operations against the nationalist Tamil guerrillas holed up in the island's northern tip and fighting the government. U.S. rulers consider the Tamils terrorists.

However, it's not the Tamil guerrillas that really worry the U.S. and India, but rather it's China's growing economic and military presence in Sri Lanka. China has supplied Sri Lanka with modern military hardware, including fighter planes, and is helping build a modern port at Hambantota in southern Sri Lanka, near one of the world's most important oil-supply sea lanes.

All these bloody conflicts occur in a capitalist world wrecked by an economic tsunami. The Indian economy, supposedly an example of what free-market globalization could achieve, is now reeling from this crisis. Bangladesh is already one of the world's poorest countries and has lost a lot of markets for its exports of textiles.

Workers and their allies in all of South Asia must break with all these bosses, their imperialist backers and all the Muslim and Hindu fundamentalists, and build a revolutionary communist leadership as the only way out of this hell. ✪



Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. For more, go to challengenewspaper.wordpress.com. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times



Marx got no respect, but now...

NORTH STAR GROUP – Poor Karl Marx. Never got any respect. Not in the U.S.A., anyway. Seldom in the course of human events has one man been so derided, so reviled by such a great herd of ignoramuses, virtually none of whom have even the faintest notion what the object of their derision actually said, thought or stood for….

In light of current events… his insights concerning capitalism's structural defects were spot-on….

Marx wrote that in the end, capitalism's fate would be sealed… by its internal rot…. If Marx were around, he'd be laughing his head off, but there are going to be plenty of tears to go around for [his deriders].

Old-time reds built China's base

NYT, 3/8 – In the early 1950s, shortly after the Chinese Communist revolution, Chairman Mao Zedong set into motion one of the largest peacetime mobilizations in modern history….

The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps built roads, canals, bridges and dams, turning wasteland into fields of cotton, maize and rice. They built entire cities in the desert…. A survivor of the force… recalled…. "At that time there was nothing I couldn't bear…" she was honored at the time as a "Progressive Student of Mao Zedong Thought."

Sun's recollections of Communist Party zeal, sacrifice and staggering economic transformation are among the personal narratives assembled by Xinran, a Chinese journalist now a resident of Britain, in "China Witness: Voices From a Silent Generation."

Many of the older Chinese Xinran meets still take a glossy view of the Communist Party.

Asbestos poisoning for a profit

NYT, 2/19 – At least 200 deaths and thousands of illnesses are known to be related to the town's exposure to the mine….

The mine's owner, W.R. Grace & Company… and its managers knew as far back as the 1970s that asbestos… posed a risk to their workers, but they conspired to continue releasing it into the air and to misrepresent the peril….

More than 30 years ago Dr. Teitelbaum, a retired toxicologist… was sent hundreds of chest X-rays of Libby workers and of workers at [a non-tainted] mine in South Carolina….

"At the end of the study, I wrote a letter saying that 30 percent of the miners in Libby have asbestosis, and nobody in South Carolina has asbestosis…. "They said thank you very much and did nothing with it."

For Arab public, US is terrorist

NYT, 2/26 – A battle over the term terrorist has become a proxy for the larger issues that divide Washington and the Arab public….

In Gaza… most Arabs came away certain who the real terrorists were.

"Public opinion views what happened in Gaza as a kind of terrorism…. They see Hamas and other such organizations as groups who are trying to liberate their countries…."

The case may be even more tangled with Hezbollah….

"If Obama thinks these organizations are terrorists, there will never be peace…." In this region… the invasion of Iraq is often referred to as a terrorist act.

Working Class Must Unite vs. Capitalism's Special Oppression of Women

March 8 marked International Women's Day, inspired by the 1908 New York City march of 15,000 women demanding better pay and shorter hours. Throughout the history of class struggle every major movement that made progress for the oppressed class has had women as leaders. From the fight against slavery, to the Paris Commune and revolutions in Russia and China, from the mass strikes of 1848 in Europe to the anti-imperialist struggles of the 1960's women workers around the world have joined with men in the struggle against capitalist oppression.

Today these battles continue. In India, Hindu women and men fought back against brutal attacks against women in cafes by groups trying to build a society where women are kept in their homes. In New York, the Stella D'oro strike has united men and women workers on the picket lines in the cold of winter. They are fighting back against the wage and benefit cuts that are being forced on them by their factory's owners. These militant struggles are an important inspiration for all of us.

With a black woman as First Lady, more female role models to idolize than ever and a new law that seems to help women get equal pay, it appears the only limit to women advancing is imagination. But the boss-worker relationship is the fundamental one under capitalism — bosses own and control their workers and workers fight to get as much they can from their bosses. If we peel back the appearance of upward mobility, women are suffering more than ever and no amount of media spin will cover up the horrible conditions all workers must deal with.

Sexism and Capitalism go Hand in Hand

According to the International Labor Organization, 22 million women around the world are expected to lose their jobs in 2009 as the bosses shift the burden of their financial crisis and wars onto the backs of the working class. The ruling class uses the special oppression of women the same as they use racism and nationalism – to oppress the entire working class. Besides lowering wages for all workers by increasing competition, sexism politically weakens the working class by dividing women and men on the job, in our homes, and during the class struggle. Black and Latino, women suffer triple exploitation from racism, as women, and as workers.

PLP fights sexism by taking on attacks against women, developing women leaders of our movement and spreading communist consciousness. The struggle against sexist ideas cannot be separated from the struggle against this system that is breeding it.

Sexism increases oppression through economic, cultural and social forces. Women make less, are treated worse on a political level and have less access to social mobility than their male counterparts. Early class oppression was seen as long ago as ancient, pre-capitalist, slave society, where women were captured and enslaved, then forced to produce more slaves. Today, with sexism as a tool, billions of dollars in profit are funneled into the coffers of today's capitalists.

Sexism is not just the attitude of chauvinism from a couple of right-wing men and women on a personal level or the result of a brutal regime like the Taliban. It is a rampant aspect of the capitalist world. In England the unemployment rate for women is at 33%. In the U.S., where women are consistently paid less than men, the best "solution" Obama could come up with for women's rights is the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act which extends the statute of limitations, to a mere 180 days, for a woman to sue if she is being paid lower wages on the job. This law is just a stop-gap to placate workers into thinking Obama is doing his best, since he's got so much on his plate waging profit war in Afghanistan and asking for more bailouts for the ruling class.

Sexist Culture Fuels Attacks

As long as this system exists, where economic exploitation makes women a commodity, women are going to be abused and disrespected in big and small ways. The abuse inflicted by teen icon Chris Brown on singer Rihanna was another revolting example of the kinds of sexist beatings that happen to millions of working class women regularly but are never publicized.

The beauty, fashion and music industries that portray women as property to be owned and displayed drive this sexist culture, which reaps billions in profits. Women and men workers not only suffer living with this culture, but end up giving back hard fought for wages trying to chase the bosses ideal of beauty by paying for make-up, "fashionable" clothes, and beauty treatments.

Attacks on women are on the rise around the world. In Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, many hundreds of young women have been murdered in the last few years. While these killings have received some publicity, in other countries woman are being murdered in even higher numbers. In Guatemala the murder rate for women is twice as high as Ciudad Juarez.

Sexism is pervasive in day-to-day discourse, within romantic relationships and friendships. Women are used as sexual objects. Female workers have to contend with unequal pay and an attitude that women are either overtly sexual beings, prim, proper ladies, or something in between – assertive as long as they "look good" doing it. This mechanical portrayal of female identity keeps capitalism alive and well by keeping the working class focused on how men and women are unequal.

All workers need to fight the inequality that is endemic to capitalism. Attacks on women keep their working class brothers in chains as well. Divisions between men and women workers help the bosses slash our wages. Sexist ideas weaken our class as men and women fight each other instead of the rulers. It inhibits the needed leadership of women workers, and inhibits men from being better fighters and stronger leaders for our class. Victory for the working class demands that we break down this division by uniting as equals in the struggle to smash the rulers system. The working class needs to smash sexism to defeat capitalism and build a communist revolution that will eliminate the oppression of all workers. ✪

1971 Temple U. Strike Won Equal Pay

The power of working-class unity among women and men was demonstrated in the 1971 Temple University strike of black and white male janitors and female maids. Both men and women struck for equal pay for equal work for women workers and won. This unity also broke Nixon's 3.2% wage freeze. An important element in this struggle was the worker-student alliance. When the college Administration attempted to use scabs to clean up the campus (which couldn't function with all the uncollected waste strewn about), the PLP-led SDS chapter dumped all the garbage back onto the campus. After two weeks, the bosses gave in.

France's Overseas Departments Continue Wage-Price Fight, Battle Martinique Cops

POINT-A-PITRE, GUADALOUPE, March 9 — Mass protests continue in this French Overseas Department and in the neighboring island Department of Martinique even after the United Against Profiteering coalition (LKP) reached a deal winning some of their demands. The French government will provide 100 euros ($120) of the monthly wage hike for three years and the local government 50 euro for one year. But the local bosses' group, MEDEF, has refused to sign the deal. The strikers' original demand was a 200-Euro increase.



In Martinique, where a similar partial deal was reached, the February 5 Collective leading that strike refused to end the strikes, picketing and roadblocks because prices have not been cut (prices in both islands are much higher than in continental France).

On March 6, cops clashed with youth and workers attempting to block a bosses' back-to-work motorcade, which drove provocatively into the capital, Fort de France. Four cops were injured as shots rang out and Molotov cocktails exploded. Ten people were arrested and the cops injured many.

A similar mass strike is developing in La Réunion, a French colonial possession in the Indian Ocean. Meanwhile, the French labor movement has yet to express real solidarity with these struggles, showing the need for workers and students in all of France to fight the racism and nationalism of their labor mis-leaders, behind the slogan: Same enemy, same fight, workers and students of the world, unite! ✪